

AFFIDAVIT: UNDERLYING FACTS AND CIRCUMSTANCES

I, Justin Schmidt, being duly sworn, declare and state as follows:

I. INTRODUCTION

1. I am an investigative or law enforcement officer of the United States within the meaning of Section 2510(7), Title 18, United States Code, and am empowered by law to conduct investigations and to make arrests for offenses enumerated in Section 2516 of Title 18, United States Code.

2. I am employed as a Special Agent (“SA”) with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (“FBI”) and have been so employed since December 2012. I am currently assigned to the Jackson Field Division Violent Crime Squad which is responsible for investigating kidnappings, extortion, bank robberies, Hobbs Act violations, and other violent crimes.

3. This affidavit is made in support of a criminal complaint against, and arrest warrant for, JESSICA LEEANN SLEDGE (“SLEDGE”) for a violation 18 U.S.C. § 1958 (use of interstate commerce facilities in the commission of murder-for-hire).

4. The facts in this affidavit come from my personal observations, my training and experience, and information obtained from other agents and witnesses. This affidavit is intended to show merely that there is sufficient probable cause for the criminal complaint and arrest warrant. As such, this affidavit does not include all of the information known to me as part of this investigation, but only information sufficient to establish probable cause for the issuance of a criminal complaint against SLEDGE. Unless specifically indicated otherwise, all conversations and statements described in this affidavit are related in substance and in part only.

II. SUMMARY OF THE FACTS

5. In September 2021, law enforcement received information that an individual had solicited murder-for-hire services via the internet. The individual provided specific directions concerning the murder of Victim 1. This individual seeking murder-for-hire services was later identified as JESSICA LEEANN SLEDGE. SLEDGE made Bitcoin payments totaling approximately \$10,000 for the murder of Victim 1 on October 4, October 9, and October 10, 2021, via internet transactions. Bitcoin is widely used in interstate and international commerce.

6. Using information obtained from the internet contact, on October 22, 2021, an undercover law enforcement agent (“UC”) contacted SLEDGE on her cellular telephone while impersonating a hitman SLEDGE thought she had contracted with via the internet.

7. SLEDGE had extensive conversations with the UC from October 22 - 26, 2021. During these conversations, SLEDGE provided specific information concerning Victim 1 to the UC. These conversations were conducted via interstate commerce facilities, including cellular telephones and an internet communication application, Whatsapp. During a series of recorded conversations, SLEDGE confirmed that she was paying for the murder of Victim 1. Whatsapp uses interstate commerce facilities to allow individuals to communicate.

8. From October 22-26, 2021, through WhatsApp, SLEDGE provided the UC with multiple photos of Victim 1 and photos of several vehicles that Victim 1 normally drives, including the license plate numbers/letters of the vehicles.

9. On October 26, 2021, physical surveillance was conducted in Pelahatchie, Mississippi. At approximately 8:20 a.m., SLEDGE contacted the UC via WhatsApp and described the vehicle that Victim 1 was driving to the store to the Marathon gas station to get breakfast. Physical surveillance confirmed that Victim 1 arrived at the gas station in the vehicle

described by SLEDGE. A photograph was taken of Victim 1 at the gas station and forwarded to the UC. The UC sent the photograph to SLEDGE, who confirmed that the person in the photograph was the intended target (Victim 1).

10. On November 1, 2021, SLEDGE agreed to meet with the UC, who SLEDGE thought was the assassin that she had hired to murder Victim 1. SLEDGE and the UC met at a location in Rankin County, Mississippi. SLEDGE provided the UC with an additional payment in cash and discussed the murder of Victim 1.

III. CONCLUSION

For all the reasons described above, there is probable cause to believe that JESSICA LEEANN SLEDGE has used interstate commerce facilities in seeking to hire someone to murder of Victim 1, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1958 (Murder-For-Hire).

Respectfully,



Justin Schmidt, Special Agent
Federal Bureau of Investigation

Sworn and subscribed by me this 2nd day of November, 2021.



Honorable F. Keith Ball
United States Magistrate Judge